TASK FORCE THUNDERBOLT CHRONICLES

VOLUME I, ISSUE I NOVEMBER 2005

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY	2
CAMP VICTORY MAYOR'S CELL	4
CAMP SLAYER'S MAYOR CELL	6
CAMP LIBERTY'S MAYOR CELL	8
CAMP STRIKERS' MAYOR CELL	10
CHAPLAIN'S CORNER	12
FEATURED DIRECTORATE	13

THUNDERBOLT SIX

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Message from the Front

We recently passed the two month mark on the calendar for OIF 05-07. C Battery, 1-12 and TF Thunderbolt are now joined by the rest of the deploying units. Though the brigade headquarters is not in Kuwait where the B Battery, 1-12 and B Battery, 5-3 have settled in (along with C, 1-12), we still get to see Thunderbolts from time to time. Raiders and First Round Soldiers stop in on missions to Baghdad and beyond. They know they always have "family" here and can count on us for whatever support they need. Recently, SSG Orr's team helped with a maintenance problem that allowed them to continue their mission. From everything we've seen and heard, they are doing well and keeping supplies moving throughout the theater.

You'll be happy to know that TF Thunderbolt, the 17th FA Brigade headquarters and battalion commanders and staffs, are making a real difference here in Baghdad. Daily, someone comes up to me telling me how great it is to have us here. The team runs a garrison command headquarters and 5 camp mayor cells. Each camp is different with unique challenges. The battalion command teams and mayors have made themselves indispensable. They, and the Soldiers who make up each cell, have solved long standing problems that really make a difference for everyone living here. We are incredibly proud of their performance.

HHB is also functioning at a very high level. CPT Dennis and 1SG Reitmeier make it look so easy. We have everything we need and they are making sure we all stay fit and grow professionally while we're here.

Most of you know that MAJ Johnson, MSG Fleming and SPC Holland have made it possible for

THUNDERBOLT SEVEN

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Hello Thunderbolt Family:

We are driving on with the mission and performing well. As units come and go we are quickly becoming the experts on the ground and we are doing it with great proficiency. The tire theory applies in this case; the more you change a tire the better you become at changing one. While we are making progress here, we know that this is possible only with your help. Thank you for keeping the home going so that we can focus on the mission at hand. Thank you, Rear Detachment, for providing help to families and continuing the daily flow of Army life at Fort Sill to keep our Colors flying proudly.

As we move closer to the holiday period, please ensure we use our time wisely and invoke the

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

BY CPT MATT DENNIS

Dear FRG Members,

It has only been a short while since my last update, but I wanted to share a few highlights of the past couple of weeks. SSG Pasley has been accepted to Warrant Officer Candidate School. We congratulate him, and his family for their accomplishment. PFC McAllister was promoted to SPC. He and the motor pool gang have done amazing work transforming their workspace into a model motor pool for the rest of the installation. We also added another thunderbolt to the Family this week when SPC Gutierrez gave birth to Alejandro "Alex" Diego Gutierrez. Little Alex was a bit early and will need some extra time to mature, so we keep him and SPC Gutierrez in our prayers. SSG Love remains in our prayers as well while he is,"on vacation" to see if he has a heart condition. We look forward to having him back soon. WO1 Caiga, promoted to CW2 as well. We had the opportunity to promote him on the VTC. He had a surprise when two of our nations Congressional Medal of Honor recipients came by to congratulate him.

As you know from watching the television, the Iraqi Constitution was passed by a large margin. Many anticipated much violence would accompany this passing, but luckily there were very few incidents. Hopefully this is a sign that the Iraqis are ready to move on, and are more willing to accept compromise as a necessary part of democracy.

Our directorates continue to improve life on the Complex. SGT Batey and SPC Kyota headed up the effort to install AFN cable in almost all of the living trailers on Camp Victory. Their service has improved the quality of life for thousands. HRD spearheaded the Medal of Honor tour, and is working on other projects for the coming months. DPW is hard at work preparing for the rainy season. Preventing the flooding that occurred in past years is their priority, and evidence of their work is all over. DOL stays busy ensuring all the equipment and supplies are resourced for the ongoing projects we are working on. Someone must make sure we do things legally and stay within regulations. Our legal section fills this role. The Mayor cells are gearing up for a very busy period of time where higher than normal occupancy will keep them on their toes. Last, but certainly not least, our religious support team is keeping us spiritually fit with bible studies, worship, prayer time in the mornings, and encouragement when we need it.

All in all I have to report that the Thunderbolt Brigade is fully up and running, and people are taking notice. Gennie reports that the FRG is strong and getting stronger. I encourage all families of the Garrison Command to attend the HHB FRG meetings. Everyone is welcome regardless of what your parent unit is. There are events planned for the holidays and I encourage everyone to participate. We have had a positive response to the VTC and will continue to schedule these events in the future as well. Thanks for all you do, and please continue to support us and each other. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at matthew.b.dennis@us.army.mil

THUNDERBOLT!

New Thunderbolt Motorpool Office

THUNDERBOLT SEVEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

aid of others to get through any rough spots. We can enhance our well being in many cases by fellowshipping with others and sharing our experiences. Please use the programs available on and off post to continue life cycles and lend a hand to someone in need if the opportunity presents itself. Toys for kids and other programs should be well on the way and the Rear Detachment can provide information on how to take advantage of these great programs.

The flow of care packages and the consumption of them can be seen in the wear of our DCUs; keep them coming, we can alter the DCUs or increase our PT. Phone calls and e-mail are fine but words can not display the expression on faces when a letter or package arrives. We are watching the mailing deadline to ensure our goodies arrive back there on time and ask that you keep the deadlines in mind as well.

Thanks for all you do.

Congressional Medal of Honor Tour
Mr. Gary L. Littrell, U.S. Army
Mr. John J. McGinty, III, U.S. Marine Corps
(2nd and 3rd from the left)

THUNDERBOLT SIX

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

everyone to have a VTC with loved ones. SSG Bradley has done another great job putting together a slide show capturing our first 30 days for you. Let us know what you think and if you'd like us to do another. We have a TF Thunderbolt Holiday VTC coming up on 10 December. It will be our time to celebrate the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Chanukah seasons with you before you start your travels.

I need to say a special thanks to the Rear Detachment for the amazing job they are doing keeping things running at Fort Sill. They remain busy planning for Army transformation, helping units deploy, reducing our non-deployable numbers, and most importantly, supporting our families and the FRG. We could not focus on our mission without selfless leaders at Fort Sill handling the myriad issues they face. We can't work them from Iraq. Please thank them for me the next time you see them for all they do to take care of you and the Thunderbolt Brigade.

Finally, this is November and most of us will be celebrating Thanksgiving apart from our loved ones. Nevertheless, we have so much for which to be thankful. We have a phenomenal team of professionals and amazing support from home. We have the best families and FRG in the Army and we feel your love through the many letters and packages we receive. We are serving our country and making a real difference. Coalition Soldiers and Iraqis are fighting together to save this country from terrorists willing to kill innocent children and civilians to paralyze this country. This is a worthy cause and all of us, Soldiers and family members, are making a contribution. Finally, we are thankful to God for His care, direction, and guidance--day by day, minute by minute. In chapel services, Bible studies, memorials for fallen Soldiers, and private prayer, men and women of faith sense His presence and have the privilege and freedom to worship. And those who choose not to worship are free to abstain without prejudice. We truly have much for which to be thankful. We will continue to keep you in our prayers. God bless America, our Soldiers in harm's way and their devoted families.

Awards Presentation to Dining Facility Employees

CAMP VICTORY'S MAYOR CELL

Baghdad, Iraq--By the time you read this we will have been on the ground here in Iraq for about 90 days. I thought I would use this newsletter to give you all a report card on how we are doing in our new found profession as a Camp Victory Mayor Cell, (actually this is a great venue to brag on our people and your soldier). I want to focus this letter on our "Behind the Scene" folks, the Junior Enlisted and NCOs on our team. First off I want to tell you about how proud I am of this group of Soldiers. These folks have been given responsibilities consummate with a much a higher pay grade and rank and they all are doing a bang up job.

SPC Randy Kyota is our automation specialist by day but, additionally CSM Hall has made SPC Kyota the Point of Contact in charge of Soldiers detailed to lay cable to all of the living trailers within the life support areas (LSAs) on Camp Victory. Because of his efforts all soldiers, from Private to Colonel, living in trailers will have free access to Armed Forces Network (AFN). This is a huge moral booster for the troops. SPC Justin Tolenna works in our billeting department. He is responsible for a myriad of tasks that include safety inspections for each trailer each month. Because of his efforts all of our Soldiers can sleep well at night knowing that their trailer is safe from electrical and fire hazards. SPC Jason Graber is our Environmental Protection Officer, very important stuff as we try to teach the Iraqi people about good stewardship of their natural resources. He also keeps Coalition Soldiers out of trouble by advising them on how to properly handle hazardous material. When he is not doing that which is a full time job by itself, he is down in the motorpool lending his talents as everything from a mechanic to a Bobcat tractor driver. SPC James Bratton, PFC Angelica Ciriaco and PV2 Jessica Ross all work at our help desk and let me tell you, it takes a special person to handle the multitude of questions, work orders, complaints and praise they receive. It all starts out at the help desk. These Soldiers have done outstanding work and have deftly assisted angry senior officers and NCOs, given them the information they needed and when they left they were satisfied by the help they received.

I am equally pleased with our Junior NCOs. Here are some of things that keep them busy taking care of Soldiers in one way or another. SGT Daphne Batey is the Help Desk NCOIC and is our AFN Technician. The AFN technician is not in any job description, but because of her understanding of electronics and communication equipment she is a natural. Her work goes toward the morale and welfare of Camp Victory Soldiers and it is important. She also runs file distribution for the Mayor's Cell ensuring that time sensitive information gets to the right place at the right time. SGT

Loreto Rubio is our supply guy and working to bring discipline back to the Camp Victory supply system. He has worked very hard to figure out what was left here for us from the previous unit, what he could get on the Victory Base Complex, and what we needed to find in order to let everyone else do their jobs effectively. SGT Eric Ross is our Moral Welfare and Recreation NCOIC. He is integral in the organization of countless MWR events every month. From Basketball tournaments to boxing smokers to the Aaron Tippin concert, SGT Ross is the guy who brings it all together here on Camp Victory. SSG Johnell Pasley is our Lift and Haul NCOIC. Our Lift and Haul team is tasked with emplacing concrete barriers around camp that help keep our Soldiers safe. In addition to barriers, SSG Pasley can move pretty much anything that is too big for a squad of people to move like trailers and large water tanks. Because a lot of people want a lot of things moved on camp, SSG Pasley always has plenty to do.

Our Senior NCOs and Officers are having an equally noticeable impact, but I wanted to focus on the younger members of our team and the great job they all are doing to support our overall effort here at Camp Victory, Iraq this month.

CAMP SLAYER'S MAYOR CELL

The 17th Field Artillery returns to Iraq after a 16 month absence. The mission for this deployment is different from any other that the Thunderbolt Brigade has ever had. The mission is providing a Garrison Command and Staff at the Victory Base Complex, located at Baghdad International Airport in Baghdad, Iraq. The Victory Base Complex consists of several small camps. The 17th FA has personnel assigned throughout the complex. The 13 soldier section at Camp Slayer is one of these teams adjusting to the unique support mission.

Camp Slayer is a 4.7 kilometer camp inside the Victory Base Complex. The Mayor Cell team is made up of 13 personnel from the 17th Field Artillery Brigade, "Task Force Thunderbolt." The Mayor's Cell consists of 3 officers, 5 non-commissioned officers and 5 soldiers. On September 21, 2005 we relieved the 166th Area Support Group, part of the Puerto Rico National Guard.

The transfer was a milestone for "Team Slayer." We quickly adjusted to several different positions that we were not accustomed to. The team transitioned into "The Mayor's Cell" in a matter of 10 days. The "Slayer Mayor's," as we are known on the camp, are responsible for providing life support for approximately 1700 service members, US Government employees and various contractors. Examples of the support we provide include managing a small arms range, providing billeting facilities, food service, force protection coordination and assessment, Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) activities, and provide command information to the tenant units so they can concentrate on their war-fighting mission.

Team Slayer is made up of two sections, Operations and Facilities. The Operations Section is responsible for the day to day operations of the camp, manages and maintains a small arms range, coordinates internal force protection, maintains current base camp force protection assessments, and disseminates command information to tenant units. The other section is the Facilities Section. The Facilities Section is responsible for billeting operations, land management, supervising the dinning facility and MWR activities. They maintain the infrastructure of the camp. Together the two sections work hand in hand to provide the residents of Camp Slayer with the best possible life support so the tenants can concentrate on their missions.

The Mayor of Camp Slayer is Major Eric Healey, Battalion Executive Officer for the "First Round" Battalion, 5-3 FA. Major Healey confirms that the transition was completed. "Our transition was seamless," states Major Healey. "We quickly learned the systems that were in place, which facilitated the Transition of Authority." The Camp Mayor Continued by stating, "We conducted a mission readiness exercise, at Ft. Sill, that prepared us for this non-standard mission."

The 17th FA BDE Garrison Command and Staff task force is comprised of the Brigade Headquarters and its two subordinate Battalion Headquarters and select key experts in commodity areas that a FA BDE does not commonly have such as Engineers, and senior Logisticians. Although this mission is nonstandard for the brigade their core competencies of command and control tracking and managing current and future operations, maintaining current assessments in tactical operations and garrison activities in support of the brigade led nicely to the transition which allowed for the personnel to grasp the tasks involved in manning a garrison headquarters.

As a whole, Team Slayer has successfully transitioned into it's new mission. We are enthusiastically embracing this new challenge and are proud to contribute to the mission by supporting the camp residents, keeping them as comfortable as resources allow. Major Healey offered these remarks on the future of the team. "Everyone is motivated to support the tenants of Camp Slayer. Team Slayer is prepared to tackle anything that comes it's way."

CAMP LIBERTY'S GOVERNOR CELL

Once again, the opportunity presents itself for us "old men" to share some of our self-perceived experience during the course of this deployment. My theme for this month is to convince each one of you, both families and soldiers, to "keep time in perspective."

Saint Augustine said, "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know."

As this deployment goes into the third month, it's important to put our "TIME" here thus far into context. Just last month, we were witnessing, first hand, the beginnings of democracy in Iraq. With the adoption of their constitution, Iraqis voted to push away from 30 years of oppression and tyranny. They developed and ratified a constitution in less than 3 years time. Given the world's have to have it now attitude, this was quite a feat for any country. It is important to remember that the United States declared independence in 1776, but we did not adopt a constitution until 1787. My point, democracy takes time to develop. So, we who serve our country, and took oaths to defend it, have given up a period of time in our lives to support this cause. And if we get it right, our sons and daughters will never have to do what we do.

Newly promoted PFC Meyers

For those who are missing loved ones, pace yourselves. We still have a lot of time to go on this deployment. If you can control that anxiety, it will go by much faster. Set realistic goals and get them done over a longer period. Do less with more. Some of us type "A" personalities, myself included, want to get things done now…in short order. That's just the way we are trained and conditioned to work thru problems. It makes me comfortable. Often times, we work this way because it makes us feel like time will go by faster. In reality, time is finite and cannot be changed. I now realize that some things take longer to complete. There are things that we have begun here in Iraq, that I will never see come to fruition. I can only set things in motion. So personally and professionally, I've learned to become more patient and to anticipate the next long term change that we can make.

The time has now come for the rest of our Battalion to deploy. Recently, Bravo Battery moved out to join the rest of us here in Theater. Trust me when I say, they are trained, equipped, and ready for the mission. Bravo is a great organization tested and proven in a number of exercises at Fort Sill. CPT Smith and 1SG Harrill are among the Army's best leaders and they will take care of your soldier. That, I can guarantee.

Unfortunately, the time has come for someone to depart the Theater as well. Due to an injury, CPT Bryan Coleman will return to the states and have surgery on his knee. CPT Coleman took the Battery thru training, certification, and deployment. He really wanted to stay with the unit, but it would have posed an unnecessary risk to him and the Battery's soldiers. That said, CPT Travis Immosete will take command of the battery within the next 45 days. Travis and his wife are no strangers to the Raider Battalion. Travis was a Lieutenant here with a great reputation. He was hand picked and will do an outstanding job leading the unit.

So far, our time here has gone by remarkably fast. Life here is much more bearable for us as we live and work with all the great people from the Raider Battalion and the Thunderbolt Brigade. Don't be frustrated with not being able to control time. It will pass soon enough and life will go on into the future and beyond.

God Bless and Take Care.

Raider 6

P.S. I just had my 40th Birthday in October, but my wife, Rachel, will still be 29 after her birthday in November.

West LSA Cell

West LSA Leadership

Mayor

MAJ Ramirez

Sheriff

MAJ MSG Laney

CAMP STRIKER'S MAYOR CELL

Hello dear friends and families,

The Steel Warriors have made significant progress since our last report to you. Let me fill you in on some of the details…

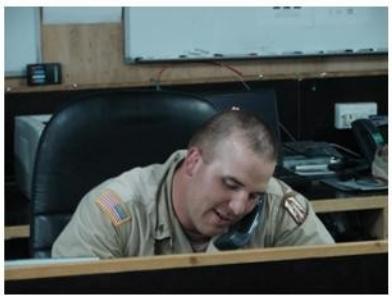
We have come through the Ramadan period with no serious incidents to the team. So please families don't believe everything you read in the papers. In fact the whole period is one of reflection and spiritual insight for the Iraqis. Our Iraqi friends during this whole time were always very nice and courteous to us here at Camp Striker.

The new Chapel has a fresh new concrete foundation, and the framing is going on now. 1LT Layne Matthews and MAJ Hall have been coordinating the inaugural services with the 3ID Chaplains and 17th FA BDE. It should be a wonderful event; of course we will have pictures for you.

Security is the name of the game here in Iraq. Our higher headquarters has issued new guidance on badging all incoming personnel onto the Baghdad International Airport. SGT Giangrosso and SFC Parrott have been phenomenal in getting the new regulations and co-ordinating with many outside agencies. Also, we are installing new concrete barriers that go way above our tents and living quarters. This is just another way we are making Camp Striker a better place to live.

We have more good news! SGT Underwood as our Dining Facility representative was told that we are getting a new Dining Facility here on Camp Striker. At the last Dining Facility meeting he was successful in convincing the Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR) staff, that we really need a new one. Hopefully in 6-8 months we will be serving meals from a new Chow Hall.

SFC Green has implemented a personnel accountability system that allows us to always have an accurate count of just how many Soldiers we have living on base. His system has vastly increased our reaction times when we get personnel tasking orders here in the West Baghdad International Airport area.



SSG Martin has single-handedly cleaned up the hazardous material waste sites and the eight motor pools of Camp Striker by removing 1,150 gallons of oil and 88 used 55 gallon drums.

SPC Johnson our automations expert has fully wired up the Mayor Cell for secure internet, and non secure Internet. If you get e-mails regularly from your loved ones you can thank him for it. He has improved the Mayors briefing room as well.

The Mayor Cell here can be, and often is quite hectic. There are literally over 8 missions going on at the same time every day. 1SG Sims is constantly directing traffic and making order out of chaos, and happy to say we have not dropped a mission yet.

We are all working very hard here, but we are a part of a great team: the "STEEL WARRIOR" Team. We thank you for your prayers. You are all in ours. Looking forward to tomorrow, and we will continue the M
ission.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

As the Holidays approach our hearts turn toward home. We think about our families and friends. Let us not forget what the Holidays are all about. The Holidays are spiritual occassions. Let us turn our hearts toward our creator, our heavenly Father, God Almighty. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the LORD God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person. " Genesis 1:1; 2:7. We must remember the purpose for the season. Even the celebrations around the New Year can become very spiritual if we, under God's leadership, assess where we have come from spiritually and where we are going spiritually. Then write and implement a plan to be more spiritually fit in 2006 than we were in 2005.

The following is paraphrased from the USAREUR REUNION TIME articles. Each month I will offer reunion tips from the above mentioned resource. I strongly recommend that you save these for future reference. These are tools to put in your deployment and reunion tool box. I can only provide the tools. Whether you use them or not is up to you.

Now is the time to start planning for a successful reunion during R and R leave and after redeployment. As families and friends prepare to reunite there is much to do: 1) Each person should make a list of things to talk about so you don't forget things. 2) Make sure each family member is included in the homecoming. 3) Use lots of PRAISE for the good things that have happened. Studies show it takes 5 to 20 positive comments to make up for one negative comment. 4) Always recognize special occasions and celebrations. 5) Ask open ended questions with your children, "What is your favorite subject in school and why?"

The army stresses values-definition [n] beliefs of a person or social group (family) in which they have an emotional investment (either for or against something). Family Values are extremely important. What family values can help you during the deployment, during R and R leave, and redeployment?:

LISTENING: Value what your family members have to say; Encourage them and concentrate on what they are saying; Avoid the temptation to solve everything, many times people just need to be heard.

DEMONSTRATING CARE: Show your family through thoughts, words, and actions that you care for them.

REKINDLE RELATIONSHIPS: Family relationships require maintenance. Plan and do acts of kindness and tenderness.

SENSITIVITY: Be sensitive to each family members unique needs.

HONESTY: Communicate honestly and openly about anxieties, misunderstandings, and frustrations.

INTIMACY: Plan times for each family member. Date your spouse. Also, date your children. Go out with each family individually. Share how much that one means to you.

PATIENCE: Patience is a virtue. Go slow and grow with each other. Don't be afraid to request outside help. Your chaplain is a great place to start.

FEATURED DIRECTORATE

DSPO
Directorate of Security, Plans and Operations

The valued members of DSPO are (Top Left) SGT Jose Picena; (Top Middle) PV2 Tashia Burgess, PV2 Shawn Neel, and SFC Robert Stabile; (Top Right) PV2 Tashia Burgess; (Bottom Left) SFC Robert Stabile; (Bottom Middle from left to right) SGM Joe Cavazos, CPT Mark Sylvestre, SSG Agustin Fortanelli, CPT Matt Harper, PV2 Tashia Burgess, CPT Adam Swedenburg, SGT Jose Picena, CPT Trent Bunnell, and MAJ Tom Artis; (Bottom Right) SSG Agustin Fortanelli.

What is DSPO, and why do you care anyway? The four letters of DSPO stand for Directorate of Security, Plans and Operations, but the DSPO section is much more than that. Part of our mission is to make sure everyone on Victory Base Complex (VBC) comes home in one piece; that is the Security piece of DSPO. Security is our number one priority and we take that task very seriously. Our focus areas include the development of policies, plans, and programs for access badging, force protection, and safety. Plans and Operations go hand in hand. We are the section of the Task Force that translates the commander's intent into actionable tasks/directives for subordinate Base Camp Mayors and the Garrison Staff. Additionally, we conduct liaison operations with our higher units. While DSPO may seem like another in a long string of Army acronyms, in reality it and the rest of the Task Force Thunderbolt enable the other warfighters on the VBC to focus on their combat mission.